

Releasing Shame, Loving Myself and Seeing Hope

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As many of my fellow men who experience SSA, I lacked a fatherly figure . (My father died when I was very young .) I also lived with a mother I feared.

After a difficult childhood in which I could hardly exist authentically, and didn't know how to be respected nor to express myself freely in the world of men and women, I started to develop sexual attractions for men. These feelings began during my teenage years.

Being familiar with psychotherapy and psychoanalysis, it was quickly obvious that the men I fantasized about were typical representative figures of the dad I would have liked to have. I did not have a dad, any fatherly figure or anyone I felt could help me, and without a brotherly group of men who can offer fatherly support, it was just too hard for me not to find refuge in my homosexual fantasies.

Looking for help on the Internet, only one resource inspired within me the trust I sought and needed. It led me to take the step to be authentically open to other men and to do so in the framework of an experiential weekend. Not being religious, I decided to trust the pragmatic approach of People Can Change and, in the process, to learn how to surrender the voice in my head that kept saying "no one can help me, or can be like me , there is no way out of this issue." I therefore enrolled in People Can Change's Journey into Manhood (JiM) in England. This was one of the best decisions of my life. Through the emotional healing exercises I began to experience at the workshop, eventually, everything I had dreamt of appeared to be possible: I met other men with the same issues, same hopes, same aspirations, Some were single, others happily (or unhappily) married. Some were in the beginning of their journey, others nearer the end of their journey, but all were determined to change the dynamics of their life and to express themselves as authentic men. We all recognized a commonality and found a brotherhood that clearly existed among us.

I learned several lessons there. Among them, I could love myself just as I was at this time, with my SSA; that there was no 'one' way to be a whole man; that my fears of sensual contact with women were a lot about stories I told myself and were based upon events of my past.

Two years later, I can say that my life has dramatically changed: I am no longer thinking of suicide and I am surrounded by a community of brothers – not only from the PCC community, but also from old friends I got closer to by opening up authentically with them and engaging in meaningful communication with them. I am also getting more confident in dating women. Most

importantly, I feel that I can now make the kind of life decisions that enable me to live in a way in which I can truly experience happiness.

There are no miracles, nor instant healing as part of this journey. Rather we are engaging in a beautiful journey enabling us to understand ourselves and to function at emotional and physical levels that provide us with greater peace and serenity. The journey has provided us with both hardships and with important breakthroughs. As many of my fellow journeyers say, SSA can be a gift -- if we take the journey as an opportunity to work on underlying issues that have plagued our lives. The journey offered me the opportunity to be such a whole man. The kind of whole man that many men I admired will probably never be. Why? Because they never gave themselves half a chance to follow the path I did nor to engage in such a deep journey of personal growth.